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TAGS: [PHUM](#) [PREL](#) [PINR](#) [ER](#)
SUBJECT: CONDITIONS IN TRACK B PRISON

Classified By: Ambassador Ronald K. McMullen for Reason 1.4 (d)

¶1. (C) An UNMEE official informed Poloff of the conditions in Track B, an underground prison located on the former site of Kagnev Station. The official said an Eritrean UNMEE staff member was summarily arrested in November 2007 for not possessing his demobilization card, which is proof of completion of national service. The man was held in Track B for several weeks before being released.

¶2. (C) The staff member reported roughly 400 prisoners held in the facility. Many individuals were abducted from refugee camps in Sudan under the guise of job opportunities in Khartoum, loaded onto trucks, driven to the Eritrean border, and released to the Eritrean military. He described the conditions within the jail as horrible, with only meager quality and quantity food provided - and none allowed from the outside. He mentioned that many prisoners talked of being tortured, and suicide attempts were common. The staff member claimed he had seen many well-known people from the community visiting the prison and allowed to move about freely, almost like employees. He later heard that they were neighborhood spies of the regime and was shocked at their large number.

¶3. (C) Rumors were circulating that the prison operates under an authority independent of the judiciary, responsible only to someone "very high" up the chain of command. The staff member was told by other prisoners that high-ranking Government of the State of Eritrea (GSE) officials had attempted unsuccessfully to intervene on their behalf, implying that Track B houses prisoners who are personally important to specific members of the regime. (Note: GSE officials routinely intervene on behalf of others in court and police matters to influence the outcome. End Note.) After being released in December, the staff member learned that he was arrested due to a simple family dispute. Post has heard from several sources that family disputes in Eritrea often escalate into family members calling in favors from GSE officials to arrest, harass, or intimidate the other side of the dispute. This is especially common among families of ex-fighters.

MCMULLEN